A SERMON OF THE *Credibility of the Myſteries* OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION,

PREACHED

Before the UNIVERSITY of *OXFORD.*

On St. *Mark*'s Day, 1674.

To which is added

A DISCOURSE on 1 St. *John* v. 7.

CONTAINING

A Vindication of that Text from the Cavils and Exceptions of the SOCINIANS.

By *THO. SMITH*, D. D.

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Nobiliſſimo Viro,

D. ROBERTO BOYLE,

Veræ ac Solidæ Pietatis,
Summæ eruditionis,
Inſtaurandæ ſanioris Philoſophiæ,
Optimè de literis tam Sacris quam
Humanioribus merendi
Famâ longè celeberrimo,
Magno ævi Exemplo & Ornamento:

T. S.

Hanc Concionem (unà cum Appendice)
coram Academicis Oxonienſibus,
ſolenni S. Marci *Evangeliſtæ Feſto,*
In ſacello Collegii B. Mariæ Magdalenæ
Superiori anno habitam,
In debitæ obſervantiæ Μνημόσυνον,
Lubens merito dedicat conſecrátque.

ERRATA.

P. 7. l. 10. ——*tou.* p. 15. l. 13. *belief.* p. 17. l. 7. *the* ordin: l. 23. *ingenious.* p. 21. l. 24. for *its* read *his.* p. 26. l. 10. *revealed,.* p. 28. l. 15. *when.* p. 34. l. 14. *belongs.* p. 42. l. 5. for *I,* read *we.* p. 45. l. 12. *the onely.* p. 48. l. 24. —— *τὸν.*

The *Appendix* refers to *Page* 47.

A

SERMON

Preached before a

Learned Audience.

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1 *TIM.* III. the former part of the 16. verſe.

——*Without Controverſie great is the Myſtery of Godlineſs.*

HOW much the Doctrine of *Chriſtianity* tends to the improvement of Reaſon and Learning, how it has brought into the World a better and more certain knowledg of God and of our ſelves, how it has advanced the common notices of nature, and has chaſed away with the clear evidences of its truth thoſe thick ſhades

of error, that had darkned the understanding, and has removed all those prejudices, that were taken up from sense and a very partial and deceitful observation of things, may be fully demonstrated by comparing the former estate of Mankind, before the coming of *Christ* in the flesh, with the present, wherever it is received in its truth and power. Men before were led by opinion and conjecture and fancy only, as to matters of Religion and the concerns of another World: They had fears upon them indeed of a divine justice, that would revenge the violation of the law of nature either here or hereafter; and a reflection upon the strange traverses and difficulties of life had taught them to expect another life after this: but their eyes were dim however, and they could not see far into futurity; they could have no clear deductions of particular truths for want of a right knowledg of true and certain principles: hence it was, that they were so inconstant and wavering, and knew not well where or what to fix on. But *Christ* by his appearance and manifesting the will of *God* to us, *hath brought life and immortality*

2 *Tim.* 1. 10

lity to light through the Gospel, and children and persons of an ordinary reach and capacity may now easily apprehend those things, that is, in reference to *God* and his attributes, the misery we are in by sin, the means of our recovery from this woful estate of life, the immortality of the Soul, and the like; which before those great *Philosophers*, notwithstanding all their vaunts and quests after learning, notwithstanding they set up Schools and were ambitious to give names to Sects, had but a very imperfect knowledg of.

But while these truths were received by those, that were willing to be taught, and to submit themselves to the dictates of reason, and convictions of miracles, which were added to give all possible satisfaction to the understanding, others, who were resolv'd before hand not to be convinced, who had rather remain in their ignorance and idolatry and their sins, then be converted to a new Religion, and reduced to such strictness of life, as that requires, from their debaucheries and brutish pleasures, who had rather fall down before a Statue or a Picture, because their Fathers had

done ſo before them, and becauſe it was the eſtabliſhed Religion of their Country, than acknowledg and adore a *Crucified Saviour*, reject it upon the account of the *Myſteries* of *Faith*, without ever examining the weight of the arguments, that would have enforced them upon their belief: They could not in the mean while but acknowledg the happy and glorious change, that *Chriſtianity* had wrought in the World, how much it exceeds and goes beyond all the morality of the wiſeſt and beſt Lawgivers and Founders of Republicks, how it not only laies down rules for the right ordering of life, but furniſhes its votaries with a power to practiſe them; not only ſhews us a way to walk in, but takes us by the hand and leads us in it: but the difficulties, it ſeems, that are to be met with in conceiving ſome of its myſteries, offended them. This was their pretence and their plea for their infidelity; they would have demonſtration for every thing, they would be taught and convinced by Syllogiſm, their Pride and their Self-conceit and the opinion they had of their own learning would not permit them to believe.

They

They made their understanding the measure of all truth, and what did not suit with those narrow and low principles they had taken up, was scornfully rejected by them. *The Jews*, saies the *Apostle*, 1 *Cor.* 1.22, 23. *require a Sign, and the Greeks seek after Wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness.* But how irrational was the demand of both? for what greater sign could there be to the *Jews*, than the fulfilling of all the *Prophesies* in the person of *Christ*, even to the minute circumstances of his life and death, and those *mighty miracles that shewed forth themselves in him*? what greater wisdom could the *Philosophers* pretend to or desire, than the *wisdom of God in a mystery*, as it is called, 1 *Cor.* 11. 7. than those clear discoveries of the divine nature and the essential perfections of the *Godhead*, than the admirable contrivances of the redemption of mankind by the sufferings and death of *Christ*, the Son of God, than the ways and means of recovering the dignity of our nature, and of living here like men, and of living hereafter like Angels? Such a wisdom, as will not only gratifie our earnest desires and

pursuits

purſuits after knowledg, but will make us happy too for ever. Their weak and blear eyes could not endure ſuch a great light that brake in upon them, and therefore they were deſirous to retire into the ſhade. They could not fully conceive and comprehend them, they ſeemed therefore fooliſh and impoſſible notions, that were owing wholly to an ungovern'd imagination. And hereupon (a) they proceed to calumniate the *Chriſtians* as a company of well-meaning and honeſt and good-natur'd, but very ſimple and over-credulous people, who took all things upon truſt, without enquiring into their truth, and certainty; for ſuch were the ſlanderous accuſations of (b) *Celſus*, (c) *Lucian*,

(a) Thus *Euſebius* ſums them up in general; it being the common argument of the *Heathen Philoſophers* againſt the *Chriſtian* religion --τὴν χριστιανισμόν τινες οὐδένα λόγον ἀποσώζειν, ἀλόγῳ δὲ πίστει καὶ ἀνεξετάστῳ συγκαταθέσει τοὺς τῆς προσηγορίας ἐφιεμένους τὸ δόξαν κυροῦν ὑπειλήφασιν. μηδὲν φάσκοντες δυνάσθαι ἀποδείξεως ἐναργὲς παρέχειν τεκμήριον τῆς ἐν τοῖς ἐπαγγελλομένοις ἀληθείας, πίστει δὲ μόνῃ προσέχειν ἀξιοῦν τοὺς προσίοντας, παρ' ὃ καὶ πιστοὺς χρηματίζειν, τῆς ἀκρίτου χάριν καὶ ἀβασανίστου πίστεως. p.4. Pariſiis, *A.C.* 1628.

(b) The words of *Celſus*, as we find them, in *Origens* firſt book againſt that *Epicurean* Philoſopher, are theſe— τίνας μηδὲ βουλομένους διδόναι ἢ λαμβάνειν λόγον περὶ ὧν πιστεύουσι, χρῆσθαι τῷ, μὴ ἐξέταζε, ἀλλὰ πίστευσον, καὶ ἡ πίστις σοῦ σώσει σε, καὶ φησὶν αὐτοὺς λέγειν, κακὸν ἡ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ σωφία, ἀγαθὸν δ' ἡ μωρία. p.8. edit. *Cantab.* In this latter part he alludes to S. *Pauls* words, 1 *Cor.* 3. 18. which he moſt horribly and maliciouſly perverts, as *Origen* ſhews p.12. He had before, out of his great *Philoſophical* warineſs, adviſed his readers not to take up opinions upon truſt, without following reaſon and a rational guide, which he imputes to the *Chriſtians*, and reckons them among the τοὺς ἀλόγως πιστεύοντας μητραγύρταις καὶ τερατοσκόποις, &c. *ſuch as raſhly believe juglers and pretenders to Legerdemain tricks, whoſe credulity and ſimplicity they abuſe to evil deſigns and intents.* So in the third book, he moſt falſly accuſes the whole body of Chriſtians,

c) *Lucian*, and (d) *Hierocles*, and the rest of the learned enemies of the *Christian Religion*. They upbraided the *Christians* of their times, with whom they conversed, in their writings and in their discourses, that they received all ἀλόγῳ πίσει καὶ ἀνεξελέγκῳ συγκαταθήσει, *with an irrational Faith and an hasty assent, past without any examination*, that they could bring no proof or demonstrative argument of what they held so pertinaciously, that nothing was required to make a *Christian* a *Believer*, as they used to speak by way of Scorn, but ἄκριτος καὶ ἀβασάνιστος πίστις, an *unjudicious and groundless Faith*; yes certainly, a good life and a sanctified understanding, and an humble opinion of a mans self. But these are but words, and men are not to be laughed and rallied out of their faith and a well-grounded perswasion; there is nothing of argument in scorn and passion; they only shew the weakness of the cause, and the

ὡς πάντα μᾶλλον σοφὸν ἀπελαυνόντων τὸ λόγου τῆς πίστεως αὐτῶν, μόνους ἀνοήτους καὶ τοὺς ἀνδραποδώδεις καλοῦντων, *as driving away every wise man from the doctrine of faith, and only admitting persons void of understanding, and of a base and servile temper.* p. 121.

(c) *De morte Peregrini*, speaking of the *Christians*, whom he makes a company of idiots, easily cheated — ἅτε πρὸς ἀκριβῆς πίστεως τὰ τοιαῦτα παραδεξάμενοι.

(d) In *Eusebius*, in the confutation of his impious book (which he intitl'd φιλαλήθης.) wherein he compared *Apollonius* of *Tyana* to our most *blessed Saviour*, where he objects to the *Christians* --κακόπλοια καὶ εὐχέρειαν-- *lightness and easiness of nature*, p. 512. and calls them --μωρὸς καὶ βεβιωκολημμένους-- *fools and rusticks* p. 514. edit. *Paris*: in fine librorum *de demonstratione Evangelica*.

want of reaſon in thoſe, who make uſe of them.

But now after ſo many myriads of Converts to the *Chriſtian Faith*, after the atteſtation and conſent of ſo many ages, who have examined ſeverely the principles, on which it is founded, who would expect that any one ſhould dare now to queſtion the truth of it again, that men who have been baptized into it, ſhould abjure and renounce it, ſhould no longer acknowledg *Chriſt* their *Saviour*, ſhould deny him to be *God*, or that he had any commiſſion from Heaven to inſtitute a new Religion, ſhould act over the part of the *Jews*, and arraign the *Son of God* as an impoſtor, and ſide with the *Heathen Philoſophers* againſt *Chriſtianity*, as a doctrine not to be endured and embraced, and make uſe of their very arguments for the defence of their infidelity? But we know whence the malice and the infidelity of theſe *Theiſts* proceed; they have abandoned themſelves to a wicked life, they are immerſed in ſenſual pleaſures, which they make the only end of life. They are convinced, that *Chriſtianity*, which is a *Doctrine according to Godlineſs*

ness is not consistent with such practices, which yet even nature and right reason utterly condemn.

The *Mysteries* of *Faith* do not so much trouble these men, as the severity of its commands. These they cannot away with, their lusts help them to arguments against the other, and they content themselves with little pieces of Sophistry, and think to vindicate the ill course of life, they have taken up, this way. Natural conscience and an ordinary reflexion upon the works of nature will not permit them, it may be, to deny a *God*, though they live, as though there were none: They will acknowledg him, it may be too in a good humour, the Creatour of the World, but not the Judg and Governour of it; they look upon themselves, as only born to gratifie their sensual appetite; They declare equally for a liberty of living and thinking as they please. They will have no restraint laid upon their understanding, or their lives. *Christianity* is too strict, and therefore too difficult for them; They may have the wit perchance, but not the morality of the *Philosophers*, whose very lives not-

withſtanding will condemn them as much as the *Chriſtian doctrine*. Their evil education and cuſtome and prepoſſeſſion, thoſe great hinderances of truth, made their refuſing *Chriſtianity* the leſs inexcuſable upon the account of its myſteries, while they acknowledged the rules and inſtitutions of it to be according to the higheſt reaſon, and the exaltation of the humane nature, while theſe men pretend its myſteries to be therefore incredible, becauſe the rules of it, which thwart their luſts ſo much, are ſo ſevere. Little or no good I know is to be done upon theſe men by perſwaſion or argument, of which they are ſcarce capable, who turn all things into Burleſque and ridicule: They it ſeems are too witty (for ſo they call their boldneſs and want of judgment) either to underſtand or embrace the principles of Chriſtianity; but their ill lives ſhew, that were they as clear as the principles of *Geometry*, ſo long as a ſtrict and holy life is as neceſſary and eſſential to the being of a *Chriſtian*, as a right and ſound faith, they would except and cavil at them, and at laſt reject them; and if the *Goſpel be hid*, be eſteemed after

after so many clear and undoubted revelations, after such evident proofs and convictions, an obscure and incredible doctrine, *it is hid to them that are lost*, or rather, ἐν τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις, *in them that are lost*; it is only so to such desperate and obstinate wretches, whom reason it self cannot satisfie, *in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, least the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.* 2 Cor. iv. 3,4.

But these are wild and extravagant persons, of debauched understandings and lives, and only to be confuted by the severity of laws; and of the two the *Christian* religion has suffered more by the secret underminings of *Heretick*s, than by their bold attaques. These are the more dangerous enemies, who deny the truths and mysteries of it, upon a pretence of wariness and caution, and *go soberly about to destroy it.* But all their objections, how plausible soever, must at last resolve into obstinacy and pride: They fancy things must be, and are, as they would have them, or else

they cannot be at all: They vainly ſuppoſe themſelves able to ſearch into the depths of all divine and humane knowledg, and being once prepoſſeſſed with this conceit, they grow peeviſh and angry becauſe the *Chriſtian Religion* propoſes things to their belief, which they cannot graſp, and are too big for their underſtanding; and rather than forego this beloved *Principle*, they will deſtroy the *Fundamentals* of *Chriſtianity*, and to apply that of * *Tertullian* to them, *niſi homini Deus placuerit, Deus non erit, homo jam Deo propitius eſſe debebit*: *Chriſt* ſhall not be *God*, nor ſatisfie the divine juſtice for the ſins of mankind, becauſe this ſeems incongruous to them; it is a difficulty, that doth puzzle their underſtanding; it is above the ſtrength of their fancy; their reaſon, they ſay, tells them, this cannot be; allowing of no ſuch thing as *faith*, which is the great duty of the *Goſpel*, and forgetting, that *Chriſtianity* is, as it is undoubtedly, *the great myſtery of Godlineſs*.

* In *Apologetico cap.* 5. where he mentions an old decree of the *Roman Senate*, *Ne qui Deus ab Imperatore conſecraretur, niſi à Senatu probatus*; and hereupon he tells us, that the Emperor *Tiberius* moved by the report of thoſe [mighty] works, which declared the truth of our *Saviours Divinity*, he received out of *Paleſtine*, *detulit ad Senatum cum prærogativa ſuffragii ſui*; though the Senate were not diſpoſed to admit him into the number.

Thus under a pretence of clearing the truth

of

of *Religion*, and making it the more easily intelligible, to *Turks and Jews*, they resist it in the true notion of it, and corrupt and destroy it; to whom fully agrees that character, which St. *Paul* gave of the followers of *Simon Magus*, 2 *Tim.* iii. 8, Κατεφθαρμένοι τὸν νοῦν, ἀδόκιμοι περὶ τὴν πίστιν, *men of corrupt minds, and reprobate concerning the faith*; such whose understandings are wholly vitiated and perverted, notwithstanding the great and fierce claims they laid to knowledg, as if they were the only men, that understood the will and mind of *God*; such who reject the establish'd truths of the *Gospel*, who have no regard to *the heavenly doctrine of the Evangelists and Apostles*, the truth of which they sealed and confirmed with their blood; but do μεθοδεύειν τὰ λόγια τοῦ Κυρίου πρὸς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας, to use the words of St. * *Polycarp* in his Epistle to the *Philippians*, that is, *by their fraudulent devices model the oracles of God according to their own fancies and lusts*; who set up a new Religion, which the *Catholick Church of Christ* never knew or was ac-

* Ὡς ἂν μεθοδεύῃ τὰ λόγια τοῦ Θεοῦ πρὸς τὰς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας, καὶ λέγῃ μήτε ἀνάστασιν μήτε κρίσιν εἶναι, ὅστις τοῦτον τὸν πρωτότοκον τοῦ Σατανᾶ φήσει: *ex editione Reverendissimi* Usserii Armachani, p. 20. This perchance more particularly respects *Marcion* the heretick; for by that name he called him to his face: as we read in *Irenæus* 3. *lib. adv. hæres.* cap. 3.

acquainted with, and endeavour to destroy the *faith of Christianity*, and think in the mean while they have reason on their side for so doing: and how far by their arts and subtilties and plausible insinuations, by this their *slight and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive* (for it is nothing else, however blancht over and disguised with shews of sober reason) they have prevail'd upon this Age, is too sad to consider; so that now it chiefly concerns us to secure the ground-work, *the principles of the doctrine of Christ*, and to oppose this growing evil, *to watch and stand fast in the faith, and quit our selves like men, and not to be like children, carried away with every blast and wind of doctrine*, and especially of the vain doctrine of *Socinus*, as it will appear, when the varnish and false colours are washt of, but to be *establisht in the truth of the holy Gospel*, as the *Church* hath taught us to pray in the *Collect* of this *anniversary* of St. *Mark*.

To evince therefore the unreasonableness of their pretensions, I shall endeavour in the following discourse to make out these two particulars.

1. That the great *mysteries* of *Religion* cannot

not, and ought not to be any way prejudicial to the truth of it.

2. That the *Chriſtian Religion* requires us to believe theſe myſteries, upon ſuch grounds, as we cannot reject, without doing violence to our faculties, and conſequently, that the rejecting and disbelieving them muſt be unreaſonable.

1. The great *myſteries* of *Religion* cannot and ought not to be any way prejudicial to its truth.

They who find fault with *Chriſtianity* for propoſing ſuch great myſteries to our beliefs, and would have all things ſo plain and obvious, that they ſhould command and force aſſent, ſhould firſt trie their reaſon in ſolving the difficulties of nature; and if notwithſtanding all their labour and toil, after the moſt accurate reſearches into the nature of ſenſible beings, of things that we daily ſee and handle, of things that ſeem to lie level with our underſtanding, and are no way diſproportionable to it, they cannot pretend to a perfect knowledg of them, if the ordinary operations of nature be ſo abſtruſe, and unintelligible, and theſe depths are

not

not to be fathomed, if her ſecrets are beyond the diſcovery of the moſt piercing judgment and reaſon; *Religion* with greater reaſon muſt be allowed to have its myſteries; there being ſuch a vaſt diſproportion between things relating to *God* and his nature, and the things of the world. The contemplation of nature is curious and uſeful; it is a part of the ſervice and worſhip we owe to God the Creatour, to admire his wiſdom and power in the beautiful frame and order of things, which is beſt done by enquiring into their natures and properties, into their powers and operations and qualities, by examining the curious contexture and the fitneſs and uſefulneſs of their parts, and there is nothing in the whole univerſe, but deſerves to be conſidered, and very much conduces to this end.

This is the buſineſs of *Philoſophy*, and what contemplative minds labour in the ſearch of, to diſcover and make out how things were at firſt made, and are ſtill continued in their being, and to find out their peculiar virtues, whereby they produce ſuch a variety of effects, and how they may be altered or improved for the

the farther uſe and benefit of mankind. Nothing of which can be effected, at leaſt but very imperfectly, and in a way ſcarce tolerable, by acquieſcing in general obſervations, derived from weak and ſlight notices, without deſcending to ſevere trials and experiments, or by relying upon the principles of *ordinary Philoſophy*, that are confeſſedly unintelligible, and which inſtead of explaining nature, do but perplex and confound the underſtanding, and which have nothing to maintain and keep up their credit, but the authority of a name and the immoderate love of antiquity. But whatever *hypotheſis* we fix upon, they who have the deepeſt inſight into nature will be forced to confeſs, they ſee but a little way, and all that they can pretend to is but conjecture and probability, that when they may ſeem to arrive at ſome ſatisfaction in the order and connexion of things, it is very poſſible and likely, that things may be made and exert their cauſalities otherwiſe, than they ſuppoſe, be their fancy never ſo ingenuous, and their reaſon never ſo profound and ſtrong (for who will be ſo preſumptuous, as to limit either the wiſdom or

power of *God*, that he can do no more, or muſt do what they fancy?) that there are thouſands of things, that they cannot give any ſatisfactory account of, and that the more they ſeek to comprehend the reaſon of things, the more they are at a loſs, the more they are diſſatisfied, and the effect of their ſtudy is nothing but diſorder and trouble of mind.

Now if we are convinced of the weakneſs and inſufficiency of our reaſon in our ordinary ſpeculations, if it fails us, when we attempt to give an account of our ſelves, and the operation of our minds, and when we have to do with plain matters of ſenſe, how unfit and unable muſt it be to comprehend and make out things, that ſtand at that infinite diſtance from it, to which it bears no proportion? They may as well pretend that all theſe great difficulties and perplexities, we meet with in the conceptions of things, ſhould be taken away, that all men ought to be born compleat Philoſophers, and be inſpir'd with the perfect knowledg of things, which they cannot attain to after ſeveral years, ſpent in labour and ſtudy, that nothing ſhould exiſt, but what we can conceive,

ceive, and that the truth and possibility of things should not derive from the will and pleasure of *God*, and from that *Idea* he has in his divine understanding, but only take their measures, and be judged by those narrow conceptions, we borrow from sense. Men are not to be disputed out of the belief of their senses, that there is no such thing as motion, or continuity of parts in extended matter, because of the great difficulties, that attend the conception of them, and things are daily produced and by degrees arrive at the perfection of their being, and perform actions suitable to their respective natures, though *Philosophers* disagree in their opinions, and are dissatisfied one with another, and cannot tell how or in what manner they do all this.

2. Thus *Nature* has its *Mysteries*; and who will undertake to explain Secondly, the *Mysteries* of *Providence*, and account for all those extraordinary events, which have hapned in all ages of the world; *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and power of God! how unsearchable are his Judgments, and his wayes past finding out!* *Rom.* xi. 33. It is presumption to enquire too

buſily into the ends and reaſons of *God*'s proceedings with men, as well as impiety to find fault with them. This ſhould ſatisfie us, that *God*, who is of infinite perfection, neither does nor can do any thing, that is unjuſt; that he governs the World by an infinite wiſdom, that he permits men to act according to the liberty of their will; and that they ſtand accountable to him for the actions of their lives; and that they are but his inſtruments to bring about his eternal purpoſes and decrees; and that nothing comes to paſs without his ordering or foreſight; and that all thoſe croſs diſpenſations are for wiſe ends, beſt known to himſelf. Why things are thus, for inſtance, why the *Jews* were ſelected by him to be his peculiar people; why the coming of the *Meſſias* in the fleſh was deferred ſo long; why ſo many *Heathen Nations* lie yet unconverted, and the like, muſt be referred wholly to his divine will and pleaſure, which is guided by rules of eternal rectitude and wiſdom. Let it abundantly content us in all changes and chances of this mortal life, in all thoſe diſtinguiſhing acts of Providence, that are every where viſible between Nation

and

and Nation, or between man and man in respect of the outward conditions and states of being, that *God* will have it so. *God is wonderful in his doings with the children of men.* These things call for our admiration: They are secrets not to be enquired into; which way soever we look, whether up to heaven, or down upon the earth and sea, and observe what is done in each, or whether we turn our eyes inward, we shall find our selves surrounded with wonders, too great for our knowledg, and enough to baffle and confound our curiosity, and to convince us, that there is as well an infinite distance between *God* and us, in respect of wisdom, as of power. Now would these men have the state of things altered and changed, and the world new modelled, and new laws given to mankind, and a new nature too, and all things reduced to an easier order, and regulated by their fancies, that so nothing may be above their capacity and understanding? What is this, but the effect of a foolish pride, that is discontented and troubled, that so many things are out of his reach and power, and that will scarce be brought to acknowledg, that *God*

can

can do, more than they fancy or comprehend?

3. Beſides, thoſe who object againſt the *inſtituted religion* of our *Saviour*, the greatneſs of its *myſteries*, may uſe the ſame arguments againſt the principles of *natural religion*. That there is an infinite being, in whoſe *Idea* is eſſentially included all poſſible perfection, is the voice and dictate of nature, right reaſon, and conſcience, and evidenced by the conſtant and uninterrupted order and courſe and frame of the univerſe, and by the univerſal conſent of mankind, who have rites and ceremonies of religion, their Prieſts and their Sacrifices, to whom they offer up prayers and oblations, to whom they appeal for juſtice when injured, and to whom they flie for refuge and ſuccour, when they are diſtreſſed and in danger, as it were by inſtinct, and without any deliberation. But notwithſtanding this evidence and clearneſs and demonſtration of the exiſtence of a *God*, they will not pretend to underſtand fully the nature of the *Godhead*. That *God* is infinite in eſſence and power, and that all things owe their being to his will, they muſt be forced to confeſs, or elſe deny his being, and fancy an infinite

infinite ſeries of cauſes, infinite periods of motions, and an infinite ſucceſſion of generations, which is abſurd and contradictious and impoſſible, though they have only a negative notion of infinity. Our underſtandings cannot reach ſo far, as to have a compleat and comprehenſive notion of it: and when we cannot give ſatisfactory accounts concerning the affections of a natural body, as motion, place, time; much leſs can it be expected, that we ſhould do this concerning eternity, immenſity, or the other neceſſary and eſſential attributes of *God*: ſo that the difficulty of conceiving a thing does not any way hinder the truth and poſſibility of its exiſtence. However the moſt ſcrupulous and inquiſitive may be ſatisfied, that there are ſuch attributes, and that conſequently upon a reflection, not only on the nature of *God*, but on the ſcant meaſures of knowledg in creatures, it is neceſſary, they ſhould be above our reach and comprehenſion. As we may diſcover much in a curious piece of art, or wonder of nature, as the Load-ſtone, or any Electrical body: we may find out ſome virtue in a plant, or mineral, or peculiar ſort

of

of earth; and yet oftentimes after a laborious ſearch, the beſt *Naturaliſts* are forced to confeſs, that there is or may be at leaſt a great deal more, than what they have diſcovered.

But here, they ſay, that the underſtanding neither does nor can admit of any thing incredible; and we ſay ſo too. *God* doth not, and conſequently the *Chriſtian* Religion, which is the *doctrine and revelation of God*, does not propoſe any thing to us, as the object of our faith, that is really impoſſible in it ſelf, and involves in it a perfect and manifeſt contradiction; and nothing leſs can or ought to be judged incredible. But when they pretend, that no propoſition ought or can be believed farther, than it may be cleared up to the underſtanding by the evidence of natural reaſon, or of the things themſelves contained in it, we reject it as an unjuſt and unreaſonable demand, which will fully appear by ſhewing the falſeneſs of both parts of the ſuppoſition.

1. It is utterly falſe, that nothing is credible, but what can be proved and made out by reaſon.

reason. There are indeed several degrees of credibility, according to which the mind does admit some things with a greater ease and freeness than others. But however be the matter proposed never so unlikely or unusual, if the authority be just and good, it must not therefore be pronounced incredible, because perchance it is not fully agreeable to the present state of affairs and practice of the World, or because I have some little prejudice against it. For as in a matter of fact, where there are sufficient proofs given of a Relators both honesty and knowledg, when I have all the assurance in the World, that such a matter is capable of, and that he could not mistake in understanding it, and that his words and thoughts do not in the least disagree, when I can object nothing but a groundless surmise, that possibly, and for ought I know, it may be otherwise, this will challenge my assent, and be a sufficient warrant to me to believe it, whether I have a clear *Idea* of it or no: for this unlikelineſs and seeming repugnancy of it, may arise from my being ignorant of several circumstances, the knowledg of which would render it probable and easie:

ſo is it in matter of Doctrine; whatſoever is propoſed by *God*, becomes thereby immediately credible, and my aſſent is rational and juſt, though the thing be above my apprehenſion; and this I muſt aſcribe to the greatneſs of the object, and the imperfections of my reaſon, which neither is nor can pretend to be an arbiter and judge in ſuch *matters, which are too high for it*: ſo that before a man can ſafely pronounce a doctrine, that is revealed incredible, and reject it as ſuch, he muſt queſtion the power and veracity of *God*, and maintain, that nothing is poſſible, but what we can comprehend; and thus under a pretence of caution, betray the greateſt immodeſty in the world, when he himſelf believes ſeveral other things, upon the bare teſtimony of men, which neither his wit nor curioſity, nor his reaſon can ever be able ſatisfactorily to make out and demonſtrate.

2. It is equally falſe, that no *Propoſition* ought to be believed, but what may be cleared up to the underſtanding by the evidence of the things themſelves. The falſeneſs of which aſſertion I ſhall fully evince in theſe three particulars; by ſhewing

1. That

1. That it destroyes the nature of *Faith.*

2. It takes away the blessedness and rewardableness annext to it.

3. It reflects on the Wisdom and Soveraignty of *God*, who may, if it pleases him, propose such things to us, and command us to believe them.

1. It destroyes the nature of *Faith.* To believe in general, in the proper notion of it, is to assent to things upon the discovery and attestation of others, which are not evident and apparent of themselves; that is, when I have no demonstrative or sensible knowledg of things, I admit and judge them to be true, not because I either saw them, and can assure my self of them by any of my other senses, or because they are so evident to my reason, that I must needs embrace them, as a principle or conclusion in Philosophy, but because I have received them from another, who informs me and gives me this account of them, for whose sake I assent to them as real and certain. By which it is distinguished from science, which is grounded upon the evidence and clearness of

the apprehenſion of the reſpective propoſitions or objects, when things are ſo plain that they do neceſſitate our aſſent, as that the oppoſite members of a true and perfect contradiction cannot belong to the ſame thing at the ſame time, that equals added to equals make equals, that in a triangle, three angles are always equal to two right angles, and the like. And the like aſſurance and certainty of knowledg is gained, when we draw concluſions according to rule and the laws of method from firſt principles, which are aſſented to, aſſoon as they are propoſed, and the terms underſtood; whence there is an immediate dependance and connexion of things, and one thing naturally follows another; Then we are ſaid to know a thing, when we can run it up to its firſt principles, can trace its original and cauſe, and underſtand its effects and operations.

This diſtinction being ſo juſt and natural, to call for evidence and demonſtration in things propoſed to be believed, is to confound different aſſents of the mind, to turn *Religion* into

into Science, to deſtroy the truth of Hiſtory, and Tradition, and Revelation, and to fall into *Scepticiſm*, and doubt whether any thing be certain, but what we ſee and can prove and repreſent by a Scheme, and at laſt queſtion whether our Senſe, and what we call our Reaſon do not deceive us, or elſe, which is the effect of a greater phrenſie, run our ſelves into this groſs abſurdity, that we are as wiſe as *God*, and that he can do no more, than what our groſs fancies will have him.

That then ſome of the grand articles of Religion are not ſo clear, as *Propoſitions in Metaphyſicks* or *Theorems in Geometry*, or indeed are not clear at all, cannot be objected againſt their credibility. They are in themſelves as certain and as infallible; nay more certain and more infallible, if infallibility may be ſuppoſed to admit of degrees; but in reaſon, it cannot be expected, our knowledg of them ſhould be as explicit and as clear: *Supernatural Truths* are not, cannot be determined or judged of by proofs, derived from nature or ſenſe; they have pro-

per

per proofs of their own, as all other arts and ſciences have.

To judge of theſe things therefore by our narrow conceptions, is a moſt falſe and unwarrantable way of procedure; and indeed it cannot ſeem ſtrange, that ſo much *Error* and *Blaſphemy* and all that direful train of *Hereſies*, in matters relating to *God* and *Religion*, which have ſo much diſturb'd the peace of *Chriſtendome*, ſhould ſpring from this one abſurd and corrupt principle. Hence it was alſo, that [a] *Orpheus*, and the other *Greek Poets* have dreſſed up their *Gods* in the habit and figure of men, and cloathed them with all the infirmities and paſſions incident to humane nature, and hereby made way for all the debaucheries and ſuperſtitions, that luſt could poſſibly ſuggeſt, or a troubled fancy invent. They made uſe of no other faculty to judg of *God*, but a groſs imagination; [b] *Epicurus* upon this very ſlight pretence excluded *God* from having any thing to do in the ordering and

(a) See the excellent diſcourſe of *Plato* about this ſubject, toward the latter end of his ſecond book *de Republica*, p. 377. &c. *tomi ſecundi ex editione Serrani.*

(b) In his Epiſtle to *Herodotus*, as it is extant in *Diogenes Laertius* —ὃ συμφωνοῦσι πραγματείαι καὶ φροντίδες καὶ ὀργαὶ καὶ χάριτες μακαριότητι, ἀλλ' ἀσθενείᾳ καὶ φόβῳ καὶ προσδέησι τῶν πλησίον ταῦτα γένεσθαι. edit. Londinenſis

and governing of the world, becauſe he fancied, this could not be done without anxiety and trouble, like the due management of a great charge or employment, which takes up ones whole time, and requires contrivance and ſtudy and foreſight to keep things in an equal poiſe, to prevent diſorders, to apply remedies to the leaſt inconveniences, that otherwiſe might quickly grow and improve into a miſchief, and to ſecure all by an equal diſtribution of rewards and puniſhments; forgetting that *God*'s power is infinite and inexhauſtible; that *his eyes reach from one end of the world to the other*, and ſee into the very eſſences of things; that all things are at his abſolute diſpoſal and command; that trouble only ariſes either from fear of ſucceſs, or when we are overwhelm'd with buſineſs, or our ſtrength is not proportionable or any way ſufficient to ſuſtain ſo great a weight. *Aetius* preſently rejects the *eternal*

p. 285. — This he eſtabliſht as one of his κυρίαι δόξαι, or main principles of his Philoſophy, τὸ μακάριον καὶ ἄφθαρτον, οὔτε αὐτὸ πράγματα ἔχει, οὔτε ἄλλῳ παρέχει· ὥστε οὔτε ὀργαῖς οὔτε χάρισι συνέχεται· ἐν ἀδείᾳ γὰρ πᾶν τὸ τοιοῦτον, p. 300. and laid down therefore in the firſt place by his great admirer and follower *Lucretius* in the beginning of his philoſophical Poem, to make the better way for the *Atheiſm*, which was to follow, that is, to exclude *God*, with a fairer pretence, from having any thing to do, either with the framing or governing of the world, and to deny a providence: that cenſure, which *Cotta* in *Tully* mentions to have bin paſt upon him by ſeveral, being exactly true — *Video nonnullis videri Epicurum, ne in offenſionem Athenienſium caderet, verbis reliquiſſe Deos, re ſuſtuliſſe.* lib. 1. *de Nat. Deorum*, ſpeaking of this very *Atheiſtical* aphoriſm.

nal generation of the Son of God, because this does not in all things agree with natural generations; and because it cannot be so with men, he impiously and dogmatically concludes, it is an impossible notion, and thinks he has reason for his blasphemy and peremptoriness, by laying down seven and forty arguments for it, as they are numbred and confuted by * *Epiphanius* in his *Panarium*. The same gross fancies have the *Mahometans* of this article of faith to this day, who deride the *Christians*, by asking impious questions concerning it, and even in their *Devotion* renounce it with a great deal of earnestness, with a *far be it from thee, what the Christians impute to thee*; as if man were the measure and standard of all things, even of *God* himself, who made him, and who is of infinite perfection, beyond the utmost reach of fancy, or conception. His actions and understanding must needs as much transcend ours, as does his essence. *His ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts.* Isa. lv. 8.

* *In hæresi Anomæorum, quæ est* LXXVI.

2. This *Hypothesis* of theirs, that nothing is or ought to be believ'd but what is cleared up to the understanding by the evidence of the things

things themselves, does wholly take away the *Blessedness* and *Rewardableness* annext to *Faith.*

One necessary condition to make any action capable of reward or commendation is, that it flow from a principle of liberty; and herein man, who is endowed with reason, the only true foundation of it, has the preeminence above all other creatures, that act only by instinct, or the force of appetite, or by necessity of * Nature; He becomes hereby as it were Lord of himself, and can act or not act, according as he is guided by counsel and rational motives, or meerly as it pleaseth him; and according either to the right or ill use of this liberty, he is to be judg'd, whether he has deserved well or no. That *Chrystals* shoot out into curious and exactly regular figures, that the flakes of *Snow* are Hexagonal, and ten thousand other Rarities of Nature, are not to the commendation of the things themselves: They shew admirably the wisdom of the first contriver of them: the Artist, not the Pendulum, is praised, though it measures time so exactly, and performs all its various motions without any interruption or inequality, because this neces-

* *Principiorum Philosophiæ parte primâ, sect.* XXXVII.

farily arises from a due proportion of weights and wheels, and from a just adaptation of the several parts of it; 'tis the perfection of a man, that he acts freely, and consequently that he is virtuous out of choice, notwithstanding all the allurements and inclinations of sense. And the like is to be said of the several *assents* of the mind; if the truths of *Religion* were in themselves so clear and evident, that we could not but assent, whether we would or no, if they could be prov'd by arguments, deriv'd from sense or nature, where then would be the *blessedness of Faith* our *Saviour* speaks of, which belong to those, who *have not seen, and yet have believed?* when we have a clear and distinct perception of a thing, then we know it; and he must be very stupid and very pertinacious, that will not submit to the truth, and evidence, and conviction of a demonstration. How ridiculous would it be to raise a dispute, and heap up arguments against clear evidence, and pretend dissatisfaction in the midst of so great certainty, as science affords? If there were no difficulty in the notions, where were that *Obedience of Faith*, the Apostle St. *Paul* mentions?

Joh. 20. 29.

where

where would be our submission and humility? for a trial of which I am perswaded, that many *Mysteries* are now proposed by *God*, which hereafter as a reward of our Faith shall be more clearly made out to us, and that this shall be one principal part of the glory that shall attend the blessed in the other world, when we shall be divested of those circumstances, that now hinder the exertions of Reason, when our understandings shall be enlightned, and our capacities enlarged, and our thoughts heightened and exalted; not that it is possible for the most refined and raised intellect ever to attain to a full and comprehensive knowledg of them (for the *Angels*, those glorious spirits, who attend the throne, and are continually in the presence of God, humbly vail their faces and adore) but that what we now know by Faith and Revelation only, we shall have a somewhat clearer insight into, and be as fully and satisfactorily convinced of, as for instance, that there is a *Trinity of Persons in one undivided Essence*, as if we understood the manner of their several subsistences.

3. It reflects upon the Wisdom and Power

of *God*, who may, if he pleaſe, propoſe theſe things to us and command us to believe them. For that *God* may do this, who can queſtion? or deny, that we are as much obliged to give up our judgments and underſtandings, as our wills, to his will, to aſſent to any ſpeculation or truth of doctrine revealed by him, as to any mode of inſtituted worſhip commanded by him, or any precept of Morality; and that I am not to object and throw in my little conjectures and probabilities, becauſe it is not altogether, or in the leaſt, evident to my reaſon, when the nature of the thing renders it impoſſible that it ſhould, or if it did not, yet his command ſhould be enough to force my aſſent? now to fancy, that nothing is or ought to be credible, but what can be made out and cleared up to the underſtanding by the evidence of the things themſelves, deſtroyes this ſuppoſition, which has its certainty from, and is ſupported by, ſeveral of the divine attributes. The Wiſdom and Power of *God* are both infinite, and therefore he knows more, and can do more, than what we poſſibly can conceive: otherwiſe we muſt equal our little knowledg, which we chiefly

chiefly derive from the images and representations of things in our minds, and which every contemptible insect and vegetable is too big for, with his; and upon the same account, we must fancy our power equal too: which is the effect of an irrational pride and madness, like that of the *Apostate Angels*, and by consequence, throw off our dependence upon him, and deny to yield obedience to his laws, because they do as much cross our vitious and corrupt inclinations, as the *Mysteries* of our *Faith* do our narrow conceptions and sentiments. An infinite understanding only can fully comprehend an infinite perfection; such a proportion between the faculty and the object being altogether necessary: for if it could be comprehended by a finite intellect, it would immediately cease to be infinite. How insufferable then is such an insolence! How vain and foolish are such imaginations! and *every high thing*, as the *Apostle* speaks, extravagant fancies and conceits, that get into the brain, *that exalt themselves against the knowledg of God*, which ought to be captivated and made subject upon the highest Reason in the World to the obedience

ence and doctrine of Chriſt: which will appear by deſcending to the

2. Second Particular, I propoſed to make good, that the *Chriſtian Religion* requires us to believe its *Myſteries* upon ſuch grounds, as we cannot reject without doing violence to our faculties, and conſequently, that the rejecting and disbelieving them muſt be unreaſonable.

Now the grounds are chiefly theſe two.

1. That we believe and admit the divine Revelations.

2. That we yield obedience and ſubmit our underſtandings and all the powers of our minds to the Will of *God*.

1. That we believe and admit divine Revelations; becauſe *God* is of infinite veracity, and to deceive is repugnant to the holineſs of his Nature; there is an utter impoſſibility in it. Now if we repoſe ſo much truſt and confidence in a friend, becauſe we have tried him, and know that he is a man of great integrity, and that he abhors the very thought of deceiving any one with the leaſt falſehood, and ſpeaks exactly according to his knowledg without any reſerved or ſecret meaning or equivocation, or con-

concealing part of the propoſition in his mind that it may be otherwiſe underſtood than he intends it; much more with all the readineſs of ſubmiſſion of mind imaginable are we to receive, whatever comes from God, without the leaſt demur, or doubt, or contradiction. This an infinite and eternal rectitude does juſtly challenge from us; for *God* may aſſoon deny his being, as falſifie his word; ſo that whoever goes about to queſtion or disbelieve any thing that *God* has revealed, will run himſelf upon one of theſe two groſs and abſurd impieties, either doubt whether *God* himſelf has an exact and perfect knowledg of thoſe things, he has propos'd to our belief, or whether he has been juſt and true to deliver what he knows. It is a moſt rational concluſion of St. *John* 1 *Epiſt.* v. 10. *he that believeth not God, has made him a lyar.* No difficulty then can or ought to deter me from the belief of a thing, if *God* has once revealed it; nor can the mind of man poſſibly deſire a greater ſatisfaction than this.

2. That we yield obedience and ſubmit our underſtandings and all the powers of our minds to the will of *God*, for

1. That there are thouſands of things *de facto* above our knowledg and conception cannot be deemed by any, without the higheſt immodeſty, an unjuſt poſtulatum.

2. That all or at leaſt moſt of our knowledg deriving from ſenſe, the more things are freed and abſtracted from the entanglements of groſs matter, the more difficult is the conception; becauſe they fall leſs under the examination of our ſenſes, from which we receive ſo great prejudices in our infancy and childhood, which make that deep impreſſion on our fancies, that they are not eaſily to be removed.

3. *God* by virtue of his abſolute dominion and ſoveraignty may command us to aſſent to things above our reach, and conception, and knowledg. *Faith* is not to chooſe its *Object*, no more than a mans will can preſcribe and ſet to him a Law, becauſe its whole and only power conſiſts in the liberty of obeying or not obeying of a Law preſcrib'd by a ſuperiour Power. Whatſoever Doctrine therefore is delivered and revealed by *God*, becomes immediately credible, by reaſon of the authority, that does accompany it, and enforce it upon us.

us. The Articles of *Faith* carry along with them sufficient motives of *Credibility*, but then these motives must not be fetched from the nature of the things themselves, as if they were to be so evident, that our Reason might fully discover their connexion and dependance, but from without; that is, my *Faith* is rightly grounded, and an obligation lies upon me to believe, what is proposed by God, if it be evidenced so to be, by just and rational proofs; and if the authority be certain and infallible: God therefore declaring his Will, and confirming the Revelations he has made of it by his divine Power, this latter is a sufficient proof, and a just and rational ground of my Belief; for how absurd would it be for any one, because he cannot comprehend and make out a thing fully, which in the nature of it, and by reason of our weakness and incapacity, is incomprehensible, and which he ought to acknowledg to be such, unless he will presume to measure Eternity and grasp Infinity with a span, therefore to doubt of so plain a truth, as this is, that the divine Power cannot be made use of to confirm any *Proposition*, but what is exactly true and cer-

tain? ſo that this is not to forego our *Reaſon*, as the *Socinians* plead, for nothing is more agreeable to the principles of right Reaſon, but to act according to it: and therefore to ſay that we *Believe I know not what*, if they mean, that the objects of our Faith cannot be proved to exiſt with the ſame kinds of proofs, as what is preſented to our ſenſes, or as a propriety may be demonſtrated of the ſubject of a ſpeculative Science, this cannot be any prejudice at all to our belief, becauſe in all Faith, whether Humane or Divine, there cannot be the ſame clearneſs and evidence, but that there are ſuch Objects of our Faith we are as certainly aſſured, as if we had a particular demonſtration of each.

Now that the *Myſteries* of *Chriſtianity* are confirm'd by ſuch an authority, and therefore are to be believed by us, and conſequently that the *Chriſtian Religion* requires our aſſent to no more, than what is apparent to be *God*'s *Will*, we have this aſſurance, that they were atteſted and made good by the miracles of our *Saviour*; by theſe he proved his Commiſſion to be deriv'd from *Heaven*. This was the belief of the *Jews* in general, both Learned and Unlearned. *Nicodemus*

was

was fully convinced of the truth and evidence of it, *Joh.*iii. 2. *Rabbi, we know, that thou art a Teacher come from God, for no man can do those miracles, that thou doſt, except God be with him.* In the caſe of the blind man, who was reſtored to his ſight, the doubt was rational, *How can a man, that is a ſinner do ſuch miracles?* Joh. ix. 16. *If this man were not of God, he could do nothing*, v. 33. that is, he could not do ſuch things, as are above the power of a meer Man, which we ſee him do. It was nothing, but a moſt unjuſt prejudice to our *Saviours Perſon*, and to the meanneſs of his Birth and Parentage, ariſing from a falſe principle concerning the temporal Kingdom of the *Meſſias*, through a miſunderſtanding of the Propheſies, that made them, againſt their Belief and Conſcience, reject the authority of ſo many evident and often repeated miracles; and though they would not acknowledg him for their *Meſſias*, that came in a way of humility and meekneſs, ſo oppoſite to their humours and expectations, who thought of nothing, but triumphs and revenge; yet they are forced to acknowledg, that the *Meſſias could not do greater*; and laſtly our *bleſſed Saviour* appeals

to miracles, as to his credentials, as being a moſt rational motive to work faith in the minds of the moſt ſcrupulous; *if ye believe not me, believe the works that I do.* This then is a ſufficient confirmation of our *Saviours* miſſion, and of the doctrine *He* and the *Apoſtles* delivered from him, and preach'd through the ſeveral parts of the World, which they travelled, and after put in writing for the benefit and greater ſatisfaction of all ſucceeding Generations. Nor are we now at this great diſtance of time to call for new ſigns from Heaven, or to deſire a farther confirmation of what hath been received ſo univerſally for ſo many ſucceſſions of Ages. The holy *Scriptures* are the authentick Regiſters of the *Doctrine* and *Revelations* of *God*, and that I may add this by the way, were they but of humane authority, they deſerved not to be drolled upon, but to be treated with an equal, if not a greater, reſpect, than *Polybius*, or *Livy*, not only upon the account of their Antiquity, but for thoſe excellent remarks they contain, and the *Theiſts* of our Age may as well doubt, whether there were ſuch a man as *Cyrus* and *Alexander*, as *Moſes* and *Joſhua*, and queſtion whether

whether *Cicero* wrote those *Orations*, and the other excellent Books, that go under his name, or *Virgil* those admired Poems, as whether St. *Mathew* or St. *John*, who were the known Disciples of *Christ*, and conversed daily with him for above three years together, wrote those *Gospels*, which contain the *History* and *Acts* of his *Life* and *Death*.

Upon these evidences our assent is raised, which make it rational and just; our Faith is resolv'd into the testimony of *God*, which is only the rule of it, we believe nothing, but what our Saviour and his Apostles taught, for which we have the authority of their words, and what the whole number of *Christian* People embraced and received, as the just and true meaning of them. Now because we cannot reconcile these express and clear Revelations of the *Gospel*, laid down in plain expressions, as that *Christ is the son of God, was in the beginning with God, before the world was made, God manifested in the flesh, God blessed for ever*, and that *he and the father are one* (not to descend to the other Articles, which are laid down as clearly) with our narrow conceptions of things, is most irrationally

nally to conclude against *God* in favour of our selves, meerly for this only reason, because we cannot tell or understand, how it can or should be, when he hath told us expresly it is so. Hereupon they heap up strange and absurd interpretations of *Scripture*, and which are impossible to be true; they deny to words their proper, and natural and genuine significations; they fancy nothing but improprieties and ambiguities of expression; and admit of absurd notions for all their high vaunts and pretences to reason, which destroy the very design and institution of *Christianity*. Thus our most *blessed Saviour, the only begotten son of God* must be only so κατὰ χάριν, or κατὰ προκοπὴν καὶ ἀρετὴν βίου, *God only by grace and favour, and for the holiness and excellence of his life*, as [a] *Ebion*, and [b] *Arius*, and [c] *Paulus Samosatenus* used to blaspheme of old, or *Deus Factus, a Created God* only, such by *Designation* and *Office*, as our modern *Socinians* impiously distinguish, when, not only the name, but the essential Attributes of the

(a) Τὸν δὲ χριστὸν προφήτην λέγουσι τῆς ἀληθείας, καὶ χριστὸν υἱὸν Θεοῦ κατὰ προκοπὴν καὶ κατὰ συνάφειαν ἀναγωγῆς τῆς ἄνωθεν πρὸς αὐτὸν γεγενημένης. *Epiphanius* in hæresi *Ebionæorum*, quæ est XXX. sect. XVIII, ex edit. *Petavii*. Parisiis 1622. pag. 142.

(b) *Epiphanius* in hæresi *Arianorum*, quæ est LXIX. sect. XVIII. p. 741.

(c) *Gregorius Abulpharagius*, in historiâ *Dynastiarum*, Arabicè, p. 129. edit. Oxon. 1663. *Eutychius* in *Annalibus Alexandrinis* Arabicè, edit. Oxon. parte primâ p. 397. & 441.

the *Godhead* are ascribed to him. Thus the Doctrine of the *Ever blessed Trinity*, which is clearly contain'd in the form of [d] *Baptism*, as might fully be made good against the exceptions and cavils of *Wolsogenius*, and in St. *Joh.* v. 7. (a [e] Verse written by the same hand that wrote all the rest of the *Epistle*, as it is most evident from the verses in conjunction with it, which would be altogether defective and imperfect without it, however it be omitted in the *Alexandrine Manuscript*, rather by chance (for that is not the only omission in that Copy) than design, as if it had favoured the Heresie of the *Antitrinitarians*;) this Doctrine of the *Trinity*, I say, must be exploded, because they cannot satisfie their bold curiosity, as why the emanation of the *Deity* stops at three *Hypostases*, that is, why the *Divine Essence* is not communicated to more than *Three Persons*, and how it can be *Communicated*

(d) This argument drawn from the *Form of Baptism*, is generally made use of by all the antient *Fathers*, against the blasphemy of *Sabellius*, *Arius*, and the rest of the Hereticks, who had departed from the true faith, establisht at first, to follow phansies and inventions of their own. But reserving these numerous citations for another work, I shall content my self at present to say with the Author of the *Breviarium fidei adversus Arianos*, who lived above 1200 years since, put out by the most learned *Sirmondus*, to whom the world is so much obliged, for his publishing several writings of the antients, out of MSS. —— *Qui* [*Spiritus sanctus*] *si Deus non esset, non in baptismo in uno nomine Deitatis patri & filio sociaretur, sicut scriptum est, ubi regulam baptismi posuit ipse Dominus: Ite, inquit, baptizate omnes gentes in nomine Patris, & Filii, & Spiritus Sancti. Quod solum testimonium deberet hæreticis sufficere ad credulitatem inseparabilis Trinitatis, quia nec ipsi audent aliter baptizare, ne regulam Domini corrumpere videantur. Et ubi unum nomen dicitur, ibi & major & minor excluditur.*

(e) *Of this see the Appendix.*

nicated, and yet altogether remain *Undivided*, and the like. That this *Article* was explicitly believed in the very beginnings of *Christianity*, may, to omit at present other wayes of proofs, be evinced hence, that the *Heathens* of those times used to upbraid the *Christians* with the belief of so unlikely a Doctrine. Thus *Critias* in the Dialogue *Philopatris* (which if not *Lucians*, was written however in *Trajan*'s time, whose victories and successes in the *East*, and particularly in the taking of *Ctesiphon* and *Babylon* and other places from the *Persians*, and in repressing the incursions of the *Scythians*, as hapning just at that time, are there mentioned) when *Triephon* had expressed the belief and sense of the *Christians* about this Article, by adjuring ὑψιμέδοντα Θεὸν μέγαν ἄμβροτον, ἀεγενέτην υἱὸν πατρὸς, πνεῦμα ἐκπορευόμενον, ἓν ἐκ τριῶν, καὶ ἐξ ἑνὸς τρία; ταῦτα νόμιζε Ζῆνα καὶ ἡγεῖ Θεὸν, makes a mock at it, and replies with a great deal of impudent raillery, ἀριθμέειν μὴ διδάσκεις, καὶ ὀρκὸς ἡ Ἀριθμετικὴ, καὶ γὰρ ἀριθμέεις, ὡς Νικόμαχος ὁ Γερασηνὸς, ἐκ οἶδα τί λέγεις ἓν τρία, τρία ἓν, μὴν τὴν τετρακτὴν φῂς τὴν Πυθαγόρου; ἢ τὴν ὀγδοάδα καὶ τριακάδα.

So

So far is that from having the leaſt truth in it, which the Enemies and Oppoſers of this *Doctrine* affirm, without the leaſt ſhew of Reaſon and Authority, that it derives wholly from *Pythagoras* and *Plato*, and was learned in their Schools, and afterwards dreſt up by the *Fathers*, who were admirers of that *Philoſophy*, and not heard of till the *Third or Fourth Century*. So that upon the whole it will appear, that the *Chriſtian Religion* has juſt and ſure evidences, and therefore to fancy, which is the only thing they can alledge in behalf of their Unbelief, that nothing is or can be believed, but what ought to be fully comprehended by the Underſtanding, is ſo fooliſh, ſo unjuſt, ſo unreaſonable a thing, that nothing but intolerable Pride and Obſtinacy can poſſibly ſuggeſt ſuch a Thought, and conſequently that before any one can become an *Arrian* or a *Socinian*, he muſt forego his Reaſon, and forget that *God* is of infinite Perfection, and forget too, that he himſelf is a Man.

To draw towards a Period. *Chriſtianity* being a *Great Myſtery*, and neceſſarily ſuch:

It is but a natural inference, that all our enquiries into the *Articles* of it be ſober and modeſt; that we expect not a comprehenſive knowledg of them; that we be not too buſie and curious in our Searches into the Secrets of *God*; that being conſcious to our ſelves of the defects, and ſhallowneſs, and weakneſs of our Reaſon in leſſer matters; how imperfect and untrue oftentimes our collections are of ſenſible beings, to which our faculties may ſeem proportionate; and to what errors and deluſions we are ſubject, by taking up falſe notions, by fancy and prejudice; we learn to be *wiſe unto ſobriety*, and *not to think of our ſelves, above what we ought to think*. It was nothing at firſt, but an overbold curioſity, not content with *Revelation*, and with juſt proofs of it, that raiſed in the mind thoughts of Disbelief; but it ſtopt not here; it ſoon improved into a proud conceit of maſtering all the difficulties of *Religion* by the ſtrength of Reaſon; and to this we may juſtly impute the original and growth of all thoſe *Hereſies* and *Blaſphemies*, that have been vented from the very firſt Preaching of the *Goſpel* to this day.

day. It is a vain thing to think to do this; 'tis a passing beyond the bounds which *God* and our own Nature hath set us; a piece of Sacrilegious rashness, as *Salvian* justly words it, in his third Book *De Gubernatione Dei*, speaking of the various dispensations of Providence: *Hoc ipsum genus quasi Sacrilegæ temeritatis est, si plus scire cupias quàm sinaris:* The *Articles* of *Faith*, as they are not to be tried, so neither to be proved by the *Principles* of *Mathematicks* or *Natural Philosophy*. It is as great folly to attempt it, as to expect it, both arising from a wantonness of Wit, which quickly looses it self in a Labyrinth of wild Opinions, and pleasing it self with new Notions and Ideas, is more and more perplext and entangled, and is scarce ever reducible to a right and sober temper.

What ill success the *Schoolmen* have had in their attempts this way upon the Articles of Religion, *Christendome* has long since had sad experience of; these men guilty of the other extream would scarce acknowledg any thing of *Mystery* in it; all things seemed so clear to them, as if they had had a particu-

lar Revelation; they have thrown open the *Vail, that covers the Ark*; they define boldly, and obtrude their Conjectures for Oracles. St. *Paul* and St. *John* ſhall be explained and proved by the Writings of *Plato* and *Ariſtotle*; thus proſtituting the Majeſty of the Sacred *Scriptures*, and corrupting the Simplicity of the *Chriſtian Religion* by their niceties and ſubtilities of Diſtinctions, and expoſing it the more to the Cavils of *Hereticks*, who obſerving the falſeneſs of their Principles, and the weakneſs and incompetency of their Proofs, are more encouraged to reject the truth of it. Hereby too a *Contentious* and *Diſputative Theology* has been introduced in the *Schools*; and unneceſſary and bold queſtions ſtarted, impoſſible to be reſolved with any ſatisfaction, which perplex and confound the Underſtanding, and are ſo far from *Building* us up in our *Holy Faith*, and from explaining the Doctrine of it, that it has ſcarce ſuffered by any one thing more. Some things we may underſtand, but we ſee more to admire, which with all our art and ſubtility we can never attain to. It is enough, that the *Chri-*

ſtian

ſtian Religion doth perſwade us by Rational Arguments to the acknowledgment of its Doctrine, that it laies down ſufficient grounds of the certainty and neceſſity of our Belief, that it gives us all the aſſurance we can, with any modeſty, pretend to, and all the proofs the nature of the things, propoſed to our belief, are capable of and will bear. 'Tis Faith in *Chriſt*, that He is the *Son of God* and the *Saviour of the World*, that denominates us *Chriſtians*; to deny this, how excellent a Perſon ſoever we make him for Meekneſs and Holineſs of Life, is to renounce *Chriſtianity*, and in effect to turn *Mahometans*; for they acknowledg *Chriſt* to have been a *Great Prophet*, to have been *born of a Virgin*, to have been *aſſumed into Heaven*, and the like. *Satis ſit pro univerſis rationibus Author Deus*; as the ſame *Salvian* has it. This is that, that is equivalent to ten thouſand *Demonſtrations*; this will level all thoſe objections, that are raiſed againſt the *Myſteries* of *Chriſtianity*; that will ſilence all the *Sophiſtry* of *Corrupt Reaſon*, and cut off all thoſe Arguments, which preſumptuous Men are wont to make: and certainly if we rightly con-

consider it, the *Mysteries* of *Christianity*, as they are proposed in the *Scriptures*, are by reason of the great difficulties, that attend the conception of them, so far from being incredible, that they ought thereby to become more credible; that is, they are more worthy of the infinite Majesty and perfection of *God*, by how much they are above the reach of our Faculties.

2. Let us remember that *Christianity* is a *Mystery of Godliness*, and consequently that the *Great Mysteries* of it ought to have an influence upon our Lives and Practices. As on the one hand, to say, that these *Great Articles* of our *Faith* are nice *Speculations*, and the *explicit Belief* of them, as they are proposed, not necessary, and to question that Sense of them, in which they have always been received by the *Catholick Church*, is to undermine the *Fundamentals* of *Christianity*; So on the other side, it takes off very much from the obligation to Obedience, and dulls those affections, which a reflexion on these *Great Mysteries* must needs cause in the mind.

That *God* should send his *Son* into the world

world to discover this Mystery to us in Person, and in order to our Redemption, was the Effect of an *Infinite Wisdom*, and of an *Infinite Love*; that *God* should be *Manifested in the Flesh* for our sakes, and submit himself to the weaknesses, and imperfections, and contumelies of the humane nature; that the *Second Person of the Trinity, Co-essential and Co-eternal with the Father*, should condescend to assume flesh, and therein to suffer; a reflection on this cannot but fill us with admiration and love. One great part of the Worship we owe to *God* consists in our admiring his infinite Perfections; all our Praises and Thanksgivings are but the outward significations of this, and faint expressions of our thoughts, which loose themselves in the contemplation of them. Now these *Mysteries* afford us eternal matter for our admiration. Besides, what greater obligation to Obedience can there possible be, than the Revelation of this *Mystery*, upon which our Salvation is founded? A Holy and Religious Life then is the best evidence of our belief of these *Articles* of *Christianity* beyond all subtility of Disputation. This especially

pecially concerns us, who are dignified with the *Holy Prieſthood*, who are *Miniſters of Chriſt, and Stewards of the Myſteries of God*. This ſhews, that we do more than barely aſſent to the truth of them, when they produce in us all, both *Prieſts* and *Lay*, theſe effects, for which they were principally diſcovered; that ſo living in obedience to the will of *God* revealed to us by his *Son*, whom he ſent out of his own Boſom, and in all holy converſation and godlineſs, we may at laſt be admitted to the ſight and fruition of his *glorious Godhead*, to ſing Praiſes and Hallelujah's to the *bleſſed Trinity* for ever and ever, Amen.

Ap-

Appendix.

IT muſt be confeſſed, that this Verſe is not to be met with in ſeveral Old *MSS.* as particularly in the mentioned *Alexandrine*, now in the *Kings* Library at St. *James*'s, brought out of *Egypt* by *Cyrillus Lucari*, when he removed from the See of *Alexandria* to the *Patriarchate* of *Conſtantinople*, who was ſtrangled by the *Turks* in the year 1638, and ſent to K. *Charles* I. though not ſo antient, I believe, as is pretended, as if it had been wrote by the hand of *Thecla*, an *Egyptian* Woman of an honourable Extraction, and a Martyr for the *Chriſtian Faith*, condemned to the *Amphitheatre* under *Diocleſian*, as *Euſebius* relates in the Supplement to the Eight Book of his *Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory*, which is found in ſeveral Copies, if it be his (*cap.* 3.) before the firſt Council of *Nice*, which is barely ſaid and conjectured; and I ſuppoſe, that it may be proved, that the *Vatican exemplar* is the more Genu-

ine of the two, and comes nigher the Original. It is omitted alſo in an ancient Manuſcript in the Archives of our *Colledg Library*, containing the *New Teſtament* entire (except the *Apocalyps*) with the *Pſalter* and ſeveral *Hymns* collected out of the *Old Teſtament*, the words ἐν τῇ γῇ being alſo wanting in the eight verſe, and in ſeveral others. Upon this the Enemies of this Doctrine triumph and boldly pretend, that it was inſerted by the *Catholicks*: Thus to mention only one for all, *Socinus* himſelf in his Commentary on theſe words—*Satis conſtat illa eſſe Adulterina, & ab hominibus, qui ſuum dogma de trino & uno Deo quâcunq; ratione defendere & propagare volebant, in hunc locum infarcta.* But let the appeal lye to any indifferent Perſon, which is moſt likely, that thoſe, who profeſſed their belief of this Doctrine, which was grounded too upon ſeveral other Texts of *Scripture*, and was derived down to them from the firſt Ages of the *Church*, and which they contended for with ſo much earneſtneſs, ſhould without any neceſſity dare commit, ſuch a Forgerie, which could not but be taken notice of by their watchful Enemies, or that this ſhould be done by

by the Oppoſers of this *Doctrine*, who were arraigned in general, by all the *Catholick* Writers, who had to do with them, as falſifiers of the ſacred Records, and were ſo much concern'd to do it in defence of their private tenets and fancies, and eſpecially to raze this Text, with which they were ſo oppreſſed, out of ſeveral Copies, from which by Tranſcripts it might eaſily be propagated into others: And conſequently it is not to be admired, that ſeveral of the *Fathers*, no not *Athanaſius* himſelf, nor *Cyril* of *Alexandria*, nor St. *Hilary*, who defended with ſo much learning the truth of this great *Myſtery*, did not make uſe of this Teſtimony, they lighting upon ſome of theſe Tranſcripts; which is to be ſaid alſo for St. *Auſtin*, in his *Book* 3. *Chap.* 22. againſt *Maximinus* an *Arian Biſhop*, for St. *Leo* in his Epiſtle to *Flavian* Biſhop of *Conſtantinople*, againſt the Hereſie of *Eutyches*, *Ep.* 10. *Cap.* 5. for *Eucherius de queſtionibus N. Teſtamenti*, and for *Oecumenius* in his Commentary on this Epiſtle, and ſeveral others. The ſame reaſon holds for the omiſſion of it in the *Syriack*, *Arabick*, and *Æthiopick* Tranſlations, the two former of which, as they are now extant, as

Tom. 6. *ex Edit. Eraſmi, Baſil.* 1542. *p.* 754.

is moſt probable, were made long ſince the times of *Arius*, notwithſtanding the pretenſions of ſome to a far greater Antiquity, the laſt is confeſſedly of a later Date. The ſcarcity of Copies in thoſe days, and the malitious induſtry and cunning of the *Hereticks* render the conjecture ſufficiently probable, if no Copy were to be found with this Verſe entire, and that we had only the authority of ſome of the Antients, who cite it as authentick, as having met with it in their Books. The *Divines* of *Lovain* in collating the *N.T.* with a great number of *Latin* Copies, found it only wanting in five. *R. Stephanus* in his Edition of the *N.T.* had the uſe of fifteen or ſixteen old *Greek MSS.* above half of which retain'd it. So the Edition of the *N.T.* at *Complutum* compared with antient *MSS.* printed in the beginning of the Reſtauration of Polite Literature in *Chriſtendome*, at the expences of the great *Cardinal Ximenes*, only with this variation, ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσι οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ὁ Πατὴρ, ὁ Λόγος, καὶ τὸ ἅγιον Πνεῦμα; καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἕν εἰσι. Thus *Eraſmus* confeſſes he met with a Manuſcript in *England*, which he cals by the name of *Codex Britannicus*, which had the

the whole ſeventh Verſe, as we now read it, and the eight Verſe, the latter part thus altered, καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῇ γῇ, Πνεῦμα, Ὕδωρ, καὶ Αἷμα εἰς τὴν μαρτυρίαν τῶν ἀνθρώπων. I ſhall lay no ſtreſs upon two Writings, which paſs under the name of *Athanaſius*, where this Verſe is cited, becauſe it is not to be met with in thoſe larger works of his, which are acknowledged genuine, the one is an account of a diſputation, according to the title, had with *Arius* in the *Council* of *Nice*; but the title is faulty, as appears from the Diſcourſe it ſelf; nor was *Arius* the Perſon diſputed with there, but one of his followers; and the reaſon of the miſtake of the title may be aſcrib'd to an ignorant *Librarius*, putting down *Arius* for *Arianus*, and the Dialogue not real, but ſuppoſed, as was uſual amongſt the *Fathers*, introducing the *Hereticks* pleading their Cauſe, and the *Orthodox* refuting their Cavils and defending the Truth. And if this may paſs for likely, there can be no great reaſon to ſuſpect the Authenticalneſs of it, the (a) words are, πρὸς δὲ τούτοις πᾶσιν Ἰωάννης φάσκει καὶ οἱ τρεῖς τὸ ἕν εἰσι. The other is in a Book extant only in *Latine* (b) lib. 1. *de unitâ Deitate*

(a) 1 *Vol. p.* 147. *Pariſiis.* 1627.

(b) *Tom.* 2 *p.* 553.

Deitate Trinitatis ad Theophilum, dicente Joanne Evangeliſtâ in Epiſtolâ ſua, tres ſunt, qui teſtimonium dicunt in Cœlo, Pater, & Verbum, & Spiritus. But this piece, I confeſs, is very juſtly rejected as none of his, though perchance wrote not many years after his time. St. *Cyprian*, who ſuffered *Martyrdome* about the year of *Ch.* 258. *Galienus* and his Son *Valerianus* being then Emperours, about ſixty years before the calling of the *Council* of *Nice*, in his book *de unitate Eccleſiæ Catholicæ*, cites this Text expreſly, as found in the Copies of his time: —*Dicit Dominus, Ego & Pater unum ſumus, & iterum de Patre & Filio & Spiritu Sancto, & hi Tres unum ſunt.* It is not any way material to the deſign and purpoſe of this Scholion to inquire, in what ſenſe St. *Cyprian* underſtood theſe words, but only to vindicate the antiquity of the Copies, that retained this reading, though it might eaſily be proved that it was a thing uſual with the *Fathers*, as no one can be ignorant, who has turn'd over their Writings, to interpret places of Scriptures ſometimes, not according to their primary intent, but by way of accomodation. Which teſtimony is ſo clear and convincing that *Sandius* in his

his *Appendix quæſtionum Paradoxarum*, uſes all his art and skill to avoid the force of it, by pretending, that ſeveral things have been changed, added, taken away, and ſome other way varied in the *Epiſtle*, as appears by the obſervation of *Poſſevinus*, who took the pains to compare the printed Copies with four *MSS.* and the acknowledgment of others, *Perkins*, *James*, and *Rivet*: from which premiſes he concludes very boldly upon a meer poſſibility, that this place was never cited by that bleſſed *Martyr*, but put in by ſome body elſe; *Quam facile itaq; etiam hic locus interſeri potuit ab his, qui non exhorruerunt ſacras literas corrumpere propter metum Hereticorum.* But firſt this is barely ſaid without the leaſt proof, and without the authority of any *MS.* Secondly neither *Pamelius* nor *Rigaltius*, nor any other, as I know of, who put forth St. *Cyprian*, make mention of any various reading in this place, all agreeing in it. Now that this Epiſtle is St. *Cyprians* is undoubted: St *Cyprian* himſelf referring to it, and that the reading is the ſame now, as it was in the old Copies written above eleven hundred and forty years ago, appears from *Fulgentius*, who not only cites this ſeventh verſe in his p. 380.

p. 772. his book *de fide Catholicâ adversus Pintam Episcopum Arianum*, in his testimonies *de Trinitate*, and in his book *de Trinitate ad Felicem Notarium*, c. 4. which thus begins, *En habes in brevi alium esse Patrem, alium Filium, alium Spiritum sanctum, alium & alium in personâ, non aliud & aliud in natura; & idcirco ego, inquit, & pater unum sumus; unum, ad naturam referre nos docens, sumus, ad personas: similiter & illud. Tres sunt, inquit qui testimonium dicunt in Cœlo, Pater, Verbum, & Spiritus, & hi tres unum sunt. Audiat* Sabellius, *sumus: audiat tres: & credat esse tres personas, & non sacrilego corde blasphemet, dicendo, ipsum sibi esse Patrem, ipsum sibi Filium, ipsum sibi Spiritum sanctum, tanquam modo quodam seipsum gignat, aut modo quodam a seipso ipse procedat, cum hoc etiam in naturis creatis minime inveniri possit, ut aliquid seipsum gignere valeat. Audiat scilicet &* Arius *unum, & non differentis filium dicat esse naturæ, cum natura diversa unum dici nequeat,* (a) but cites this very place of St. *Cyprian*, in his book *contra objectiones Arianorum*, in his answer to the tenth or last objection. His words are

p. 447. these, *In Patre & Filio, & Spiritu sancto unitatem sub-*

(a) p. 591 *ex Editione Theophili Ranaudi, Soc. Jesu, Parisiis* 1671. printed with St. *Leo, Maximus Taurinensis*, and four others which make up the *heptas Præsulum*.

ſubſtantiæ accipimus, perſonas confundere non audemus; beatus enim Johannes Apoſtolus teſtatur, dicens, tres ſunt, qui teſtimonium perhibent in Cælo, Pater, Verbum, & Spiritus, & hi tres unum ſunt. Quod etiam beatiſſimus Martyr Cyprianus in Epiſtolâ de unitate Eccleſiæ confitetur, dicens, qui pacem Chriſti & concordiam rumpit, adverſus Chriſtum facit: qui alibi præter Eccleſiam colligit, Chriſti Eccleſiam ſpargit. Atq; ut unam Eccleſiam unius Dei eſſe monſtraret, hæc conſeſtim teſtimonia de Scripturâ inſeruit, dicit Dominus, Ego & Pater unum ſumus, & iterum, de Patre & Filio & Spiritu ſancto ſcriptum eſt, & hi tres unum ſunt. If it be ſaid, that St. *Cyprian* cited only the latter part of the 8. *v.* where the *vulgar Latine* has thoſe very words, *& hi tres unum ſunt* (b) and that thus *Facundus, Epiſcopus Hermianenſis*, in the time of *Juſtinian*, to whom he dedicates his book, which he wrote *pro defenſione trium capitulorum Concilii Chalcedonenſis*, ſeems to underſtand it, without taking any notice of the 7. *v.* citing this place of St. *Cyprian*, though by a lapſe of his memory he ſaies it is to be found *in Epiſtolâ ſive libro, quem de Trinitate ſcripſit*: I reply firſt in general that [*in*] might eaſily be left out by the oſcitancy of the *Librarii*, not to ſay, razed out by the Hereticks; the *Syriack Interpreter* reading in his *Greek Copy*, what we find in

(b) *lib.* 1. *p.* 16. *ex Edit. I. Sirmond. Pariſiis* 1629.

ours, as to the latter part, καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἕν εἰσι, and accordingly translating it so, *& tres sunt testes, Spiritus & Aqua & Sanguis, & hi tres in uno sunt* ܒܚܕ *Bechad*, and so the *Arabick* Interpreter في واحد *in uno*, only the *Æthiopick* conforming to the present reading of the *vulgar Latine*. But what will they say to the *Alexandrine MS.* which they so much adore, which has the same reading, ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσι οἱ μαρτυροῦντες, τὸ πνεῦμα, καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ, καὶ τὸ αἷμα, καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἕν εἰσι; which are the words also of our *MS.* so in the Copies, which *Oecumenius* followed ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες, τὸ πνεῦμα, καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ, καὶ τὸ αἷμα, καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἕν εἰσιν. St. *Hierom*'s translation leaves out in the 8. *v.* *& hi tres unum* or *in unum sunt*, and so the *Greek* of *Arias Montanus*, and the *Complutensian Edition*; in the Margin of which later it is noted, that *Aquinas* in the exposition of the second *decretal de summâ Trinitate* against *Abbot Joachim*, who perversely interpreting the end of the 7. *v.* of the unity of will and consent, alledges the end of the 8. *v.* for his authority and justification, had made this observation, *sed hoc in veris exemplaribus non habetur, sed dicitur esse appositum ab Hereticis Arianis ad pervertendum intellectum sanum auctoritatis præmissæ de unitate essentiæ trium personarum*. I suppose the great respect

reſpect *Aquinas* had for the *vulgar Latin*, made him rather ſuſpect the whole to be added, than that it was ill tranſlated, which he would eaſily have acknowledged, had he conſulted any *Gr. MS.* But this kind of learning they were not acquainted with in that Age of Scholaſtical ignorance and barbarouſneſs. Secondly, as they take it for granted, that this was the reading of the *vulgar Latine* at that time, ſo they more vainly and weakly ſuppoſe, that St. *Cyprian* made uſe of the ſame *vulgar Latine* edition, the contrary of which appears in ſeveral of his citations, and it is more likely, that he might tranſlate ſo literally the latter part of the 7. *v.* and not at all regard the 8. *v.* or the vulgar tranſlation, and ſo it appears from the teſtimony of *Fulgentius*, cited above, that he underſtood it.

Afterward when ſeveral, out of an evil deſign to overthrow the *Myſtery* of the moſt bleſſed and adorable *Trinity*, omitted in their tranſlations of the *Scriptures* into the *Latin Tongue* this Verſe (a liberty which, it ſeems, every Pretender almoſt made uſe of, and it may well be ſuſpected, that an *Arian* then, as a *Socinian* now, in his tranſlation would be over-favourable to his own opinions, by leaving out and putting in what might make for them, and accor-

dingly interpreting what was retained to their best advantage: (a) St. *Hierome* in his preface to the *Canonical Epistles*, vindicates the antient reading, and laies open the baseness and perfidiousness of these men. I shall here put down the whole Preface; *Non ita ordo est apud Græcos, qui integrè sapiunt, & fidem rectam sectantur Epistolarum septem, quæ Canonicæ nuncupantur, sicut in Latinis codicibus invenitur: Quod quia Petrus primus est in numero Apostolorum, primæ sunt etiam ejus Epistolæ, in ordine cæterarum; sed sicut Evangelistas dudum ad veritatis lineam correximus, ita has proprio ordini Deo juvante reddidimus. Est enim prima earum una Jacobi, duæ Petri, & tres Johannis, & Judæ una. Quæ si sicut ab eis digestæ sunt, ita quoq; ab Interpretibus fidelitèr in Latinum verterentur eloquium, nec ambiguitatem legentibus facerent, nec sermonum sese varietas impugnaret, illo precipuè loco, ubi de unitate Trinitatis in primâ Johannis Epistolâ positum legimus, in quâ etiam ab infidelibus translatoribus, multum erratum esse à fidei veritate comperimus; tria tantummodo vocabula, hoc est, aquæ, sanguinis, & spiritus in ipsâ suâ editione ponentibus, & Patris verbiq; ac spiritûs testimonium omittentibus, in quo maximè & fides Catholica roboratur, & patris ac filii ac spiritûs sancti una divinitatis substantia comprobatur. In cæteris vero Epistolis, quantum*

à

(a) This Preface is printed in an old edition of the *N. T.* with the interlineary Glosses, and I find it in several *MSS* both in the *Bodleyan* and our own *Coutedg Library* before the *Catholick Epistles*. The Style is exactly St. *Hierom's* and questionless his, and acknowledg'd as such, both by *Erasmus* and *Socinus*, however omitted by *Erasmus* in his edition of St. *Hierom's* works at *Basil.*

à noſtra aliorum differt editio ; Lectoris prudentiæ derelinquo. Sed tu Virgo Chriſti, Euſtochium, dum à me impenſius Scripturæ veritatem inquiris, meam quodammodo ſenectutem invidorum dentibus corradendam exponis, qui me falſarium corruptoremq; ſacrarum Scripturarum pronunciant. Sed ego in tali opere nec æmulorum meorum invidentiam pertimeſco, nec ſanctæ Scripturæ veritatem poſcentibus denegabo. *Eraſmus* and *Socinus* are ſo urged with this teſtimony of St. *Hierome*, that they are forced to make uſe of very pitiful and diſ-ingenuous arguments to invalidate it. *Socinus* had ſaid before —*fortaſſe ante* Hieronymum *vix ullus inveniretur, qui teſtimonium iſtud hoc in loco planè agnoverit*, the falſity of which conjecture, however ſo warily laid down, has been diſproved; hereby craftily concealing the citation out of St. *Cyprian*, he very boldly accuſes St. *Hierome* of Forgery, who having got a Copy or Copies, in which this verſe was added, *adverſus fidem aliorum omnium exemplarium, tam Latinorum, quam Græcorum, lectionem particulæ iſtius tanquam germanam defendere & promovere cœpit, conquerens publicè eam culpâ & fraude hereticorum abraſam à vulgatis codicibus fuiſſe.* But St *Hierome* has ſufficiently confuted the falſeneſs and boldneſs of this Cavil. He was uſed to this kind of language, as if

he

he had corrupted the Scriptures, but he was no way moved by it; though this accusation of those of his own time perchance may not so much be referr'd to this place, as to his translation in general, and may proceed not so much from heretical malice and pravity, as envy of several of his contemporaries, who were orthodox in the faith, but were no friends to his new translation. He charges the omission upon these *unfaithful Translators* (questionless *Sabellians* and *Arians*) and upbraids them with it as a thing manifest and notorious, and easily demonstrable; and certainly he would not have made himself so obnoxious, unless he had grounded his confidence upon the authority of several *Greek Copies*: with what little pretence of reason therefore *Erasmus* and *Socinus* fancy St. *Hierome* to have changed the publick and common reading, let any indifferent person judge. But supposing that the Copies of those times varied, which *Erasmus* grants (and therefore St. *Hierome* is most falsely and unjustly accused by *Socinus* to have been the author of this interpolation) He enquires, *quonam argumento docet utrum sit rectius, utrumve scriptum sit ab Apostolo, præsertim cum quod reprehendit, tum haberet publicus usus Ecclesiæ?* To this it may be answered, 1. that some

vitia-

vitiated and defective Copies, ought not prejudice the authority of entire and better Copies, whether *Latin* or *Greek*. 2. that St. *Hierome* had reason to prefer and vindicate that reading, which gives such an evident proof of this great Article of the *Christian Religion*, agreeable to the *doctrine* of the *Catholick Church*, derived down to them by an *universal Tradition*, and acknowledged as such, by all, excepting a few, whom either discontent, or pride and conceitedness of their own parts, and a love of innovation and of being the author of a Sect, had drawn into the contrary heretical opinion. Besides, his words are so clear, that one might justly wonder, that *Erasmus* should pretend any difficulty or perplex sense in them, as he does in his, *non satis video, quid sibi velit hoc loco* Hieronymus; but that we have too just cause to suspect, how that great *Scholar* was biast and perverted in his judgment, concerning those great mysteries of Faith; though he is so wary and cunning, as not to discover himself too openly. He indeed is forced to confess the nature of the *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost* to be simple and undivided, and the essence the same, though he is peremptory, that it cannot be proved from this Text, *constat hic agi de fide testimonii, non de substantia personarum*,

(a) *de illâ (σοφίᾳ) ut mihi quidem videtur non agitur hoc in loco quod & glossa ista interlinearis, quam vocant, agnoscit.*

sonarum, herein followed by (a) *Beza*, and with a great deal of ceremony confesses it to be pious to submit our understanding to the judgment of the *Church*, as soon as she shall declare herself (as certainly she has done in this in her publick Creeds, to the great shame and conviction of Hereticks, who reject her authority) yet still for all this demureness, he pleads for a liberty of interpreting *Scripture*, as if the truth were not yet wholly reveal'd, and the *Church* might err in her declarations, *nec interim nefas est citra contentionem scrutari verum, ut Deus aliis alia patefecit* (which is also the pretence of *Socinus* and his followers:) and accordingly he interprets several places of *Scripture* in favour of *Arius* and the other *Hereticks*, and particularly this, *cum totus locus sit obscurus, non potest admodum valere ad revincendos Hæreticos* (the same pretence being made use of for all places, though never so plain) and endeavours to elude the force of that famous place in 1 *Tim.* 3. 16. by expunging the word Θεὸς, as much as in him lies, that is, by pretending it was added by the *Arian Hereticks*. So that we need the less value the censure he passes upon S. *Hierome* in this matter, where nothing but pure zeal for the truths of *God* could make him so concern'd and fervent — *Ille sæpe numero*

mero violentus est parumq; pudens, sæpe varius, parumq; sibi constans.

Idacius Clarus a *Spanish Bishop*, who died about the year 388, at what time the elder *Theodosius* and *Valentinian* were Emperours, cites both verses, though as to their order transposed, and with a little alteration, in his book against *Varimadus* an *Arian Deacon, responsione* 3.—*Item ipse* (i.e. *Johannes Evangelista*, whose *Gospel* he had just before cited) *ad* Parthos, *tres sunt, inquit, qui testimonium perhibent in terrâ, Aqua, Sanguis, & Caro, & tres in nobis sunt: & tres sunt, qui testimonium perhibent in cœlo, Pater, Verbum & Spiritus, & hi tres unum sunt*; which very citation is made use of, as being borrowed hence, by the author of the collections of the *decretal Epistles*, which beyond all doubt are proved to be counterfeit[a] and suppositious, in the 1 Epistle of *Hyginus*, and by this is to be corrected, *Item ipse ad* Parthos, *tres sunt, qui testimonium perhibent in terram, Aqua, Sanguis & Caro; & tres in nobis sunt, qui testimonium perhibent in cœlo, Pater, Verbum, & Spiritus, & hi tres unum sunt.* There is like variety of reading in both verses in several old Copies, some leaving out ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ and ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς or ἐν τῇ γῇ, others retaining them: For this [*in terrâ*] *Socinus* confesses to be

Tom. 4. Bibliothecæ veterum Patrum. Paris. 1610. pag. 372.

(a) *Consule Epistolarum Pontificalium censuram à D. Blondello editam Gen. ve. A. Chr. 1628. pag. 190.*

found *in quibuſdam emendatis exemplaribus*, though that we may gain nothing by this confeſſion, he tells us immediately after, it is not extant *in emendationibus*. It might eaſily be foreſeen, that if either had been left, and particularly this latter; the one would have infer'd the other juſtly and neceſſarily, and therefore it cannot ſeem ſtrange, if the firſt corrupters of this Scripture, to make all ſure, and to render their falſe and perfidious dealing the more unſuſpected, omitted both; ſo too in that antient *MS.* *Grotius* made uſe of, though he gives us no proof of its antiquity in that place, and ſuppoſe it were written a thouſand years ſince, we are not to be ſwayed by it, as if it were authentick, ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες τὸ Πνεῦμα, καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ καὶ τὸ αἷμα, and no more, who thereupon conjectures theſe words καὶ οἱ τρεῖς ἓν εἰσι, with the former verſe to have been added by the *Arians* to prove the *father, ſon* and *holy ghoſt*, to be one in conſent only, but afterwards removed and altered by the *Catholicks*, and added to the former verſe, which is ſaid without any the leaſt proof either from reaſon or antiquity, and has nothing to maintain the fancy, but the great name of the Author of it.

That which * *Sandius* and ſeveral others allege in

* *In appendice Interpretationum Paradoxarum p.* 381.

in the first place, that *eo omisso meliorem esse verborum connexionem*, the connexion is far better, if the 7 v. were omitted, and that therefore it ought to be so, and was antiently omitted; if the supposition were true, is not only vain and frivolous, but very bold and immodest to ty the *spirit* of *God* to such a way of writing, as pleases their humours and fancies best, and savours most of humane artifice, and by the same argument they may reject not only verses, but whole chapters in the *N.T.* for the meanness and inaccuracy of the stile, and the seeming carelesness of the method, which is not always conformable to the rules of the *Gr. eloquence.* 2. *Indignum est summo Deo esse testem, imo coram quo judice testis foret?* is a groundless and bold cavil; for this *witnessing* is nothing else but the declaration of *God* to mankind by evident signs and tokens concerning our *Saviours* being the true *Messias*, and of his being born in the flesh, and that he came from him. This *God* has attested and sufficiently made known to the World, and in this sense the Word often occurs in the *Scriptures*, without the least indignity offered *to the Divine Nature.* The only pretence he has for his fancy is a base and unworthy comparison he conceives in his mind between *Gods*

being a witneſs, and mans being a witneſs in our Courts of Judicature, forgetting the genuine and eaſie ſenſe of the word, as I have above expreſſed it. 3. That it is highly probable that this verſe was inſerted by a *Sabellian*, the contrary whereof is moſt true. 4. That in ſeveral MSS. and Editions of modern languages, there is a tranſpoſition of theſe two verſes. The ſame before was acknowledged to be found in ſome *Greek copies*, which no way proves the pretended interpolation, but only that antient copies do not all agree. 5. That this v. does very highly favour the *Arians*, but this is ſuch a ſtrain of fancy, that he may as well allege the firſt words of the Book of *Geneſis*, to prove *Ariſtotles* opinion of the eternity of the World. If men out of a prejudicate opinion, againſt the doctrine of the *Catholick Church*, allow themſelves to interpret Scripture according to their own fancies, it cannot ſeem ſtrange to any, that they ſhould go about to prove and juſtifie their blaſphemies from the plaineſt texts of *Scripture*, that in the judgment of all ſober perſons, who are free from thoſe prejudices, do moſt evidently refute them.

FINIS.